

**Testimony in Support of HB5530
February 22, 2011**

Dear Members of the Select Committee on Children:

Thank you for your time. My name is Ian Smith. I am here as a representative of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and as a resident of Connecticut to urge the committee to support HB 5530, An Act Concerning Dissection Choice.

From middle school to medical school,^{1,2,3,4} a significant proportion of students—and many teachers⁵—are opposed to the harmful use of animals for dissection and other educational purposes. Dissection choice policies such as the one proposed in HB 5530 ensure that a balance is struck between students' right to receive a high-quality education and their varying positions on what constitutes the ethical treatment of animals.

Students' deeply held beliefs against harming animals may have been imparted to them by their parents and family, be shared by their religious community, and/or be based on their own introspection and feelings of compassion. Regardless of their genesis, students' feelings of empathy toward others are a virtue in this society that should be fostered—or at the very least, accommodated—by our state's teachers and education system.

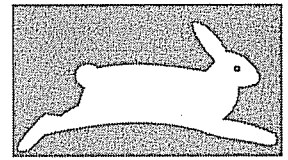
To this end, 15 states in the U.S.—including neighboring states Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York—have enacted laws or policies allowing students to opt out of classroom animal dissection. The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)⁶ and the National Association of Biology Teachers⁷ also instruct teachers to be prepared to provide students with alternatives to dissection.

Choosing not to dissect does not have a negative impact on students' education. Alternative learning methods such as interactive computer programs have repeatedly been shown to teach biology as well as—and, in most cases, better than—animal dissection.⁸ They also save teachers time⁹ and money,¹⁰ both of which are in short supply in Connecticut's school system.

One needn't look any further than modern medical training to appreciate that dissecting animals is not necessary in order to learn biology. Today, 95 percent of U.S. medical schools do not use any animal laboratories to train medical students,¹¹ and experience experimenting on or dissecting animals is not expected or required. One can even become a board-certified surgeon without ever dissecting an animal.

Classroom animal dissection—which takes the lives of roughly 10 million animals each year¹²—is consistently a key issue for PETA's student members; we regularly hear from students across the country, including here in Connecticut, who are troubled by the prospect of being expected to dissect animals. We work with students and teachers on a daily basis to replace dissection with humane alternatives. If HB 5530 passes, PETA will provide non-animal alternatives to dissection to any middle school or high school that requests them.

At its core, this bill is about fairness and access to a high-quality education, and it is about respecting the wishes of students who have given careful consideration to this issue and have made a decision based on their values. Students in Connecticut should not be forced



PETA

**PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS**

501 FRONT ST.
NORFOLK, VA 23510
757-622-PETA
757-628-0784 (FAX)

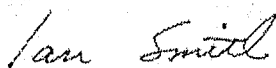
PETA.org
Info@peta.org

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to learn science in a way that they find deeply offensive or even traumatic. Better methods are available, and students should have access to them.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I can be contacted at 860-705-7637 or IanS@peta.org with any questions.

Sincerely,



Ian Smith, M.A.
Research Associate
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Home address:
93 Nash St.
New Haven, CT 06511

¹A. Bowd, "Dissection as an Instructional Technique in Secondary Science: Choice and Alternatives," *Society & Animals* 1.1 (1993): 83–8.

²Gallup, "Medical, Biotech Issues Test Teens' Moral Views" <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/9766/Medical-Biotech-Issues-Test-Teens-Moral-Views.aspx>>.

³K. Millett and R. Lock, "GCSE Students' Attitudes Towards Animal Use: Some Implications for Biology/Science Teachers," *Journal of Biological Education* 26.3 (1992): 204–8.

⁴D. Solot and A. Arluke, "Learning the Scientist's Role: Animal Dissection in Middle School," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 26.1 (1997): 28–54.

⁵J. Adkins and R. Lock, "Using Animals in Secondary Education: A Pilot Survey," *Journal of Biological Education* 28.1 (1994): 48–52.

⁶National Science Teachers Association, "Responsible Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom," 2008 <<http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx>>.

⁷National Association of Biology Teachers, "NABT Position Statement: The Use of Animals in Biology Education" <<http://www.nabt.org/websites/institution/File/docs/use%20of%20animals.pdf>>.

⁸Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, "Comparative Studies of Dissection and Non-Animal Alternatives" <http://www.dissectionalternatives.org/concerned/dissection_comparative_studies.pdf>.

⁹M. Predavec, "Evaluation of E-Rat, a Computer-Based Rat Dissection, in Terms of Student Learning Outcomes," *Journal of Biological Education* 35.2 (2001): 75–80.

¹⁰Digital Frog International, "Comparison to Real Dissection and Other Virtual Dissection Software," 2008 <<http://www.digitalfrog.com/products/frog-price-comparison.html>>.

¹¹Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, "Ethics in Medical School Education" <http://www.pcrm.org/resch/meded/ethics_med_list.html>.

¹²L.A. Hart et al., *Why Dissection? Animal Use in Education* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2007).